



Article

Heterodox Economy in the Neoliberal Education Age

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Abstract: Since the last global crisis, the critical debate on economy and the teaching of heterodox economy has resurfaced. To review the magnitude and pedagogical consequences for critical education in economics and finance is the objective of this paper, which also proposes a didactic strategy based on an experience developed at the University of Extremadura (Spain) within the framework of the Didactic Innovation Group named “Ethics of University Teaching”. For this purpose, the educational implications of teaching and learning the conventional economy that derive from behavioral and cognitive psychology and discourses on entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility are reviewed. It is concluded that the bias in the education of heterodox economy supposes a deterioration of the fundamental educational objectives, tending towards an indoctrination in the neoliberal ideology (patriarcapitalist) and to a serious loss of democratic values. For all the above, a more pluralist pedagogy at the epistemological and methodological levels—from critical psychology to critical economics or critical management studies—would help to favor a more emancipatory educational process, committed to social justice.

Keywords: economic thought; Marx; pedagogy; ethics; university; neoliberalism; Spain

1. Introduction

In 2018, on the bicentennial of Karl Marx’s birth [1818–1883], there were many monographs, magazines and congresses on his life and thought. Marx is the best analyst and scholar of the capitalist system. He is a reference for heterodox economic thought and for the culture and education of the working class and various emancipatory currents, from feminism to environmentalism. He was able to subvert even the monolithic, authoritarian and hierarchical world of religions, as was the case of Catholicism’s theology of liberation (Munck 2016).

The educational legacy of Marx and his followers ranges from the pedagogy of the oppressed by Paulo Freire to the most modern libertarian school organizations (Baillargeon 2003). It also goes from “the welfare state (. . .) to the approach to History in which we move, passing through the aesthetic that permeates works of art and films or this postmodern conception (. . .) where capitalism intermingles with the fight for social justice” (Prieto 2018). According to Polo (2018, p. 5): “Two centuries after his birth, all (or almost all) are Marxists, many without knowing it, in the same way that all (or almost all of us) are Darwinists. The ideas of the old philosopher have curdled in contemporary society in such a way that even the dissenters are impregnated with them”.

Unjustly, however, conventional wisdom is still the most widely disseminated note, both socially and medically, and the most prescribed educational medicine. The cultural diet we consume is imposed by the interests of the cultural industry (Franco 2013; Santos 2014; Illescas 2015; Del Viso 2015). This neoliberal diet involves considering any small proposal of social-democratic policy as “extreme left”. If Keynes could raise his head. . .

As Mañé (2011, p. 273) points out in her commentary on Martín-Seco's book *¿Para qué servimos los economistas?* [What are economists for?]: "Most economists who are in the think-tanks, international and public organizations, universities and public service in general are part of this [anti-Marxist] dominant economic paradigm, even if they are not aware of it; and therefore, there are no independent 'public' economists, because heterodox economists are relegated and have no voice".

The response of the university to the new (dis)educational and mercantilist Bologna model has been lukewarm, marginal and marginalized, and even more so regarding the education of economics, except for some honorable exceptions (Alegre and Moreno 2009; Franco and Moreno-Losada 2010; Manzano-Arrondo 2011; *Economistas Sin Fronteras* 2014; *Post-Crash Barcelona* 2015).

As José Luis Sampedro (2011) lucidly stated: "Now, Bologna means giving the University to the financiers and industrialists. And it will be studied what is most convenient to produce".

Despite the success of university programs and courses on Marx and his thought, such as the master's program directed by Xabier Arrizabalo at the UCM, within the framework of activities of the Marxist Institute of Economics, the general social and educational climate is not favorable to a culture of critical thinking. On the contrary, the learning of a single stream of economic thought prevails, and not the best, but the most degenerate expression of it: the neoclassical current, which establishes the hegemony of the homo economicus, the rational and maximizing agent, as well as misogynist and predator (Agenjo et al. 2017).

Two elements have shaped the structure of the anti-Marxist bias in economic education: (i) the psychologization of the economy and (ii) the marketization of education through the discourses of entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility. In consequence, according to Vázquez (2017), two teaching models are promoted: those of the therapist and the executive, respectively (to the detriment of the emancipating teacher), configuring a whole project of moral re-education of the population to accommodate society to the interests of capital.

Thus, while some experts now highlight, with a certain warmth, "the lack of theoretical, methodological and disciplinary pluralism in economic teaching" (*Post-Crash Barcelona* 2015, p. 6), others have long been leading the capitalist education of the population. As Rifkin (1996, p. 25) points out regarding the historical origin of consumer society in the United States in the 1920s: "The transformation of the average American from a psychology based on savings to one based on consumption was an arduous task. . . The American business community set out to radically change the psychology that had built a nation, its goal was to convert American workers from the position of investors in the future to that of consumers in the present. Very soon the business leaders observed that in order to make people want things they had never wanted before they had to create the figure of the dissatisfied consumer".

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, the scope of the study of heterodox economics is limited to the areas of applied economics and economic theory, leaving aside other, equally interesting areas, in addition to criticism within the orthodox economic corpus. Thus, García and Ruiz (2016, p. 13) define heterodox economics "as the study of economics—or some specific aspects of it—from some perspective, tradition or school of economic thought different from the main and hegemonic school within the academic context. Its ultimate goal is to build an alternative vision to the dominant economic current and, therefore, it is based on precepts that radically contradict its main postulates. Heterodox economics would currently include Marxists (G. Duménil, J. Bidet, D. Lévy, S. Nair), Post-Keynesians (P. Davidson, B.J. Moore, L.R. Wray, T.I. Palley, M. Sawyer, C. Descamps, J. Soichot, A. Graziani, A. Parguez, M. Lavoie, B. Schmitt) or the School of Regulation (M. Aglietta, R. Boyer, A. Lipietz, B. Coriat)".

Following Karl Polanyi, rather than Lionel Robbins, heterodox economics is the "discipline that studies the way in which the material needs of society are met through different types of organization of the production (or transformation) process and distribution of goods and services" (García and Ruiz 2016, p. 70). In fact, "since Marx wrote his critique of political economy, the entire development

of heterodox economic thought has been enormously tributary to his ideas, when it has not simply revolved around him" (Guerrero 1997, p. 199).

While neoliberal ideology is a thought that prioritizes market forces and competition as the engine of social relations, it is built on the basis of the dominant economic thought (supported by neoclassical theory), even beyond what the empirical evidence shows in this regard. Thus, "the rich people convince themselves that they are rich in their own right, without their privileges (educational, patrimonial, class) having anything to do with it. The poor people blame themselves for their failure, even if they cannot do much to change the circumstances that determine their existence" (Monblot 2016, online).

According to Monblot (2016): "The term 'neoliberalism' was coined in Paris. Its ideological definition is the daughter of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, two Austrian exiles who rejected social democracy". And he concludes: "Neoliberalism is a god that failed, like real socialism, but, unlike this, his doctrine has turned into a zombie that continues to stagger. And one of the reasons is its anonymity".

Other authors who analyze and discuss this ideological dominance of neoliberalism in the economy and society and its effects on the rise of the extreme right are Navarro (2014) and Franco (2018, 2020), for example.

Studying the heterodox literature alongside the orthodox one (and not as a substitute for it) helps us understand its limitations and gain a better understanding of reality. In a practical way, the three debates that characterize heterodox economic thought are synthesized in the following points (Guerrero 1997): the critique of the capitalist economic system as a scientific objective, the debate on the future of capitalism (revolutionaries vs. reformers) and the debate on the theory of labor-value.

A good critical synthesis of the elements that define the conventional (orthodox, neoclassical) approach to economic behavior (based on maximizing rationality) versus a more heterodox one (institutionalist and post-Keynesian) is collected, for example, by Fernández-Huerta (2008).

In the background, power relations and the concern for justice and ethical values linked to the common good guide the efforts of heterodox economic activity. Thus, several heterodox authors like Nancy Fraser or Miren Etxezarreta, David Harvey or Costas Lapavistas, connect their research with an ethical concern to overcome the social relations of patriarchal capitalist domination. "If one cares about the lives of others, that means—one way or another one—you have to fight the capitalist structures and institutions" (Olin Wright 2015).

3. Psychologization of the Conventional Economic Teaching

If Psychology has had a controversial scientific status, Economics has not had less. This can help explain, perhaps, their entwinement, whose synergies have reinforced their functional nature as "scientific" instruments of social control at the service of big capital (Rodríguez 2016).

The plague of psychologism in economics and financial education has spread like an oil slick, an intellectual mess that, however, (almost) nobody considers it appropriate to denounce. This plague is implied in books and pamphlets about self-help, in business motivation and leadership topics. Psychology at the service of the new ideologies of transcendence to impose individual happiness and undermine social indignation, caramelizing the global exploitation of capitalism. . . We can affirm that this new trans-modern psychology [transcendent and post-modern] is the guide to reach the neoliberal nirvana: the happy submission of every creature to the graceful exploitation of capital.

Moreover, as Raim (2013) indicates, a new economic discipline is opening up alongside behavioral psychology: Behavioral Economics, which no longer aspires simply to be taught and learned by students, but rather to be performative, accommodating reality to its postulates.

The criticism of neoclassical foundations by behavioral psychology, although it questions the figure of the homo economicus, does so, paradoxically, to further reaffirm the antidemocratic mechanisms of the market system. "Certainly, neoclassical economists are harmful when they defend deregulation, privatization and wage austerity. But at least they only give an opinion, which can be publicly debated and opposed. However, their behaviouralist colleagues skip the 'democratic debate' box. They are sure

to know what the general interest consists of, they impose it through a behavioural company that operates directly in the field of the behaviour of each person" (Raim 2013, p. 23).

This pathological inclination and moral perversion to which the capitalist economy leads has been studied by many authors. For example, Etzioni (2015) reviews the empirical evidence on the moral effects and the propensity towards antisocial behavior of (neoclassical) economics students. He finds that in most of the reviewed cases there is a positive correlation between an antisocial behavior and being an (neoclassical) economics student (Table 1), either because of an "effect of (self)-selection" (those with antisocial tendencies are more prone to study neoclassical economics and/or an "indoctrination effect" (to be taught neoclassical economics generates and reinforces antisocial behavior).

Table 1. Evidence on antisocial and immoral behaviors by students of (neoclassical) economics.

Authors	Effect Analyzed **	Methodology	Correlation with Antisocial Behavior	Main Results
Marwell and Ames (1981) *	Selection	Experiment (dilemma of prisoner)	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They invest only 20% in the public fund (compared to 50% of non-economists). - The notion of "justice" does not influence their decision. - 30% did not answer the question about how "fair" it would be to invest in the public fund. The rest of the players replied little or nothing. - 75% of non-economists affirm that it is "fair" to invest at least 50% in the public fund. - 25% of non-economists say that the "fair" thing to do is to invest everything in the public fund.
Carter and Irons (1991) *	Selection	Experiment (ultimatum game)	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More prone to distribute amounts of money lower than 50% to their partner.
Frank et al. (1993) *	Indoctrination	Surveys and experiment (dilemma of prisoner)	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They tend to cooperate less. - They are more justified in the rules of the game than in the notion of "justice". - The non-cooperative attitude disappears when there is an opportunity to interact with other players. - They tend to donate less to NGOs. - 38% would not report an invoice with an amount lower than what was actually consumed (compared to 23% of non-economists). - 27% would not return money lost by someone (compared to 10% of non-economists)
Frey et al. (1993) *	Selection	Survey	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are less likely to consider "unfair" an increase in the price of a water bottle on a hot day.
Cadsby and Maynes (1998) *	Selection	Experiment	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are less likely to cooperate, even in games designed to achieve an efficient balance.
Selten and Ockenfels (1998) *	Selection	Experiment (lottery game)	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less willing to devote a portion of their potential earnings to a consolation prize.
Frank and Schulze (2000) *	Selection	Experiment	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More likely to accept bribes.

Table 1. Cont.

Authors	Effect Analyzed **	Methodology	Correlation with Antisocial Behavior	Main Results
Gandal et al. (2005) *	Selection	Survey	Positive	- They give more importance to personal improvement and power than to social justice and equality.
Rubinstein (2006) *	Selection	Experiment	Positive	- Faced with a business dilemma, they tend to favor the maximum benefit over the welfare of the workers.
Faravelli (2007) *	Indoctri-nation	Experiment	Positive	- Less inclined to promote equal solutions to distribution problems.
Haucap and Just (2010) *	Indoctri-nation	Survey	Positive	- Economists are more likely to consider the law of supply and demand as a fair system for the distribution of scarce resources.
Bauman and Rose (2011) *	Both	Survey	Positive	- Less likely to donate to local social programs.
Ahmed (2008) *	Selection	Several	Non evidence	- Find positive evidence, but it is not statistically significant.
Ahlert et al. (2013) *	Selection	Several	Non evidence	- Find positive evidence, but it is not statistically significant.
Seguino et al. (1996) *	Selection	Several	Non evidence	- Do not find evidence of antisocial behavior.
Frey and Meier (2003) *	Selection	Several	Non evidence	- Do not find evidence of antisocial behavior.
Hu and Liu (2003) *	Indoctri-nation	Experiment (dilemma of prisoner)	Negative	- Confirm the results of cancellation of the antisocial behavior by Frank et al. (1993) when the opportunity to interact with other players is given.
Yezer et al. (1996) *	Selection	Survey	Negative	- More inclined to return an envelope with money.
Laband and Biel (1999) *	Indoctri-nation	Survey	Negative	- Economists are less likely to speak ill of their professional school than other professionals (political scientists, sociologists, etc.).

* The authors referred to in this table are included in Etzioni's review, [Etzioni \(2015\)](#). ** Selection effect: "Those with antisocial tendencies are more prone to study neoclassical economics". Indoctrination effect: "To be taught neoclassical economics generates and reinforces antisocial behavior". Source: Our own from [Etzioni \(2015\)](#).

Although scarce, we do find small moments of lucidity among psychologists who advocate the free market. For example, [Gardner \(2008, p. 193\)](#) explains that he is not going to "put into question the power and benefits of the market in an absolute sense (. . .) But I do not believe in any way that markets produce favourable or moral results. They can be cruel and, undoubtedly, they are fundamentally amoral. In fact, Adam Smith qualified his opinion about markets, whose morality presupposed a society capable of adopting a long-term rather than a short-term perspective".

Moreover, anti-Marxism is more solid than it seems if we observe how novel the discipline of counter-psychology is in the 21st century ([Rodríguez 2016](#)). Particularly, we can hardly find any psychologist with some media coverage who is not an apologist of the market. Iñaki Piñuel stands out among his peers, especially in his book *Neomanagement*, in which he identifies capitalist dynamics as a source of toxic and psychopathic relationships, going beyond the usual psychosocial risks related to labor stress.

In addition to the shortcomings of the positive and emotional psychology on its conception of education described by Prieto Egido (2018), we have the philosophical advice and coaching promoted by Lou Marinoff, the author of *Plato Not Prozac!*, in which an irrational anti-Marxism is disseminated, here and there, in an unjustified and probably negligent way. Unable to see, among other things, the educational contributions of the synergies between Marxism and feminism (in its fight against capitalism and the patriarchy), it deals with its philosophical therapy cases of gender violence almost recklessly and obviates the relevance of better experts. In short, “philosophical advice” is a new business niche for educational marketing and its preferred rhetoric—entrepreneurship and business ethics—to deny labor exploitation and to indoctrinate in the supposed harmony of interests between capital and labor. Thus, “from the psychologization of the malaise created by precariousness, the problem is depoliticized and transferred to the sphere of the supposed individual imbalance” (Roca 2018, p. 81). All this is framed in a great project of moral re-education of the population, to accommodate it to the interests of capitalism—which has turned, after the financial crack, towards a new twist of the welfare system, including public education, to return to a path of increasing profit rates.

4. Discussion

4.1. Moral Re-Education through Entrepreneurship

“Whoever has been deformed from a young age to become an entrepreneur will never be class conscious, even if they suffer a lot of hunger”. (Miren Etxezarreta, 16 November 2016, Público.es).

The teaching of the mainstream economy stigmatizes poverty and inequalities, considering that unemployment and social exclusion are an individual and not a structural responsibility. Under the new entrepreneurial didactics, the unemployed person is defined as one who lacks an entrepreneurial spirit. In this way the structural and systemic responsibilities of unemployment are individualized.

In this sense, Moreno-Losada (2015) analyzes a sample of Spanish university students in Extremadura (the poorest region in Spain), observing that although 60% of the people surveyed declared an annual family income of less than 20,000 euros, the majority disapproved of the implementation of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) as an essential social right. It is found that the declared majority position is that the UBI would have more negative than positive consequences, although with important differences according to income levels:

- Among the low-income levels, the percentage of those who think that the UBI would have more negative impacts is double that of those who think otherwise. However, this percentage is multiplied by more than four among those with high levels of income (more than 20,000 euros per year).
- With regard to the assertion that this measure would have more positive than negative consequences, students with lower family income levels are twice as many as those with higher income levels.

All this is indicative of the great influence of the dominant economic thought, which is the ideology of the ruling class, based on the “bad citizen, good company” model—an ideological model widely spread under the rhetoric of entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility, that subordinate the public good to private profit.

4.2. Moral Re-Education through Business Ethics

The concept of homo economicus does not serve to explain cooperative games, which are the most profitable in the medium and long term. The human capacity for reciprocity is more decisive than the capacity for maximizing individual benefit, since the human being is a subject of limited rationality, governed by instincts and emotions. If reason is important in making decisions, emotions are not less, as shown by paradoxes such as that of the ultimatum, described by neuroeconomist Alan Sanfey (Cortina 2011, pp. 112–13).

However, business ethics has become the new paradigm of the public good, also extrapolated to the educational field, so that entrepreneurship is the new framework in which social and educational relationships are defined. “Now we have a business vision of life as never before. The business model permeates all areas and gives us guidelines. (...) [The] private company has resources to reach those below and convince them that they are entrepreneurs, that they have the same interests. The business ideological manipulation is terrible, it has permeated the language and everything is focused on business” (León 2016).

There is, then, a process of moral reengineering to change the values of society, something that was already pointed out, in another sense, by Etzioni (1988). Following Garrido (2012, p. 12): “George Lakoff, cognitive linguist, proposes the following thesis: one of the fundamental discoveries of cognitive science is that people think in terms of frames and metaphors; the frames are present in the synapses of the brain, physically present in the form of neural circuits; when the facts do not fit in the frames, the frames are maintained and the facts are ignored”. And he concludes that this explains that people ignore serious facts (such as corruption or denying the evidence) because they do not act in order to defend their immediate interests, but their moral values—those values that belong to the framework with which they identify, taking into account their own history. As a result, and almost by magic, tax havens are an example of business ethics, thus obviating the first ethical requirement of any company: “to pay their taxes, not evade them”, as Susan George vehemently affirms in an interview by the Spanish Observatorio RSC (2009).

5. Pedagogical Implications

Within the framework of the Spanish Didactic Innovation Group “Ética del Profesorado Universitario” [“Ethics of University Teaching”], of the University of Extremadura (UEX), a study about heterodox economic education is carried out every year, since 2013/2014. A questionnaire is given to students of economics and related subjects of various degrees and post-degrees to assess their critical capacity and moral development regarding current economic and financial issues (Table 2). This pedagogical project has as precedent the Advanced Course in Critical Economics taught in the Faculty of Economics (UEX, Badajoz, Spain) from 2011/12 to 2012/13.

The most important aspect is not the score obtained by the students in the questionnaire, but the presentation of the subjects of economics, business and finance as a path in which students can progress consciously and motivationally in their capacity for critical thinking in a cross-disciplinary way and from their own initial position.

The questionnaire tries to show the neoliberal bias in the economic beliefs of the majority of the population, influenced by the mass media that disseminate ideology and neoliberal dogmas for the benefit of a minority, the capitalist class.

The 14 statements of the questionnaire have been written in such a way that they are all false, according to the empirical evidence collected in Navarro et al. (2011), so that the scores oscillate between 14 (maximum critical economy awareness) to 56 (minimum critical economy awareness).

The initial results of this questionnaire usually show intermediate values (Table 3). In addition, interesting situations can be illustrative of the contrast and difficulty of critical learning for economics students. Thus, given the review of literature and official statistics, some students usually display an important degree of hostility, disbelief and even aporophobia (fear, dislike or hate of poor people) when talking about, for example, economic inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth. Speaking in terms of social classes, rich and poor, causes feelings of anxiety and reactionary attitudes. Some students even find it inappropriate and obscene, something that should not be talked about. This is not surprising, partly because very few of those who come to the university have poor parents (Hernández and Villar 2015), and partly because of the alienation effect that we all breathe as a capitalist society (Moreno-Losada 2015). “Even in highly socially mobile countries such as Canada and Denmark, the children of wealthy parents are more likely to work for the same employer. This fact indicates

that the good relations of the family and not the merits are those that contribute to the young people having access to well-paid jobs” (Oxfam 2014, p. 22).

Table 2. Questionnaire about economic issues for economics students.

Indicate your degree of agreement, from 1 = Strongly disagree to 4 = Strongly agree.		
No.	STATEMENTS	Agree Level
1.	Taxes are bad and we all need to go down.	
2.	In Spain we have a fair and progressive tax system.	
3.	The latest tax reforms have implied a tax reduction for all.	
4.	Indirect taxes mainly affect the wealthier classes.	
5.	The Spanish Welfare State is financed mainly by the upper classes.	
6.	Big banks wanted to reactivate the European economy and reduce unemployment.	
7.	EU rescues states with difficulties to pay their debt, alleviating the crisis problem.	
8.	The crisis was due to the fact that we had lived beyond our means.	
9.	The ECB is under democratic control and is monitored by the European Parliament.	
10.	The EU is the result of the desire of European citizens to build a better common future.	
11.	The ECB’s main objective is to grant credits to European countries that need it.	
12.	Any employer is interested in wages as low as possible. Nobody loss.	
13.	Decreasing wages in times of crisis is essential to reactivate the economy.	
14.	Between 1980 and 2007 the unit labor costs of the Eurozone increased due to high wages.	
TOTAL POINTS		
Pedagogical Note: Only for teachers. All items are false. The statements are worded so that they are all false. After completing the questionnaire and scoring their level of critical awareness, students are given the explanation of each statement in a summary table with reference to the original source.		

Source: Our own from Navarro et al. (2011).

Even among master’s students (oriented towards tourist companies), it has been possible to verify the enormous lack of critical capacity and, occasionally, the reactive attitude towards approaches, resources and materials designed to assess and stimulate the students’ own reflective and critical capacity. Some cognitive dissonance has even been observed in students who were completely unable to identify the critical arguments of the author of a text they were asked to summarize and present in class. One of the texts usually suggested, as part of the subject of leadership and business management, is the article by Santos (2014) where the ideology of the entrepreneur is questioned.

Some students show a high level of anxiety when, without waiting for the end of their presentation, they express their negative opinion about the text they are presenting (generally resorting to anecdotal, individual or personal experiences), something that they would not do if the stated arguments coincided with preconceptions and socially accepted ideas.

At the end of the academic period, although there is little time for the assimilation of all the learning, it has been possible to observe a certain general evolution in the students’ capacity for critical and ethical reflection, especially among those who displayed an initial motivation towards critical learning (Franco and Moreno-Losada 2010; Moreno-Losada 2015; Franco 2014a, 2014b, 2016).

As an illustrative result of the educational process in critical economic education, Table 4 shows a selected list of Final Degree Projects (FDPs) defended in the University of Extremadura (UEX) in 2015, based on topics related to Marx, in particular, and critical approaches (feminism, basic income, tax havens and others), in general.

Table 3. Main results of surveyed students according to the “Questionnaire about economic issues”.

Course	Subject	Surveyed Students	Average Age	% Critical View	% Moderate View	% Conventional View
2011/12	Heterodox Economy	9	22	11.1	55.6	33.3
2012/13	Heterodox Economy	7	23	28.6	42.9	28.6
2013/14	Political Economy	20	18	20.0	50.0	30.0
2014/15	Political Economy	15	18	20.0	46.7	33.3
2014/15	World and Spanish Economy	32	19	15.6	65.6	18.8
2015/16	Financial Markets	25	21	16.0	68.0	16.0
2015/16	World and Spanish Economy	27	19	11.1	70.4	18.5
2016/17	Financial Markets	23	20	21.7	43.5	34.8
2016/17	Structure of touristic markets	21	19	19.0	47.6	33.3
2017/18	Management of touristic business	9	22	11.1	55.6	33.3
2017/18	Structure of touristic markets	14	19	21.4	50.0	28.6
TOTAL	All	202	20	17.3	56.4	26.2

Notes: According to scale from 1 to 4 (see Table 2). “Critical view” from 14 to 26 points. “Moderate view” from 27 to 42 points. “Conventional view” from 43 to 56 points. Source: Our own.

According to Vázquez (2017, p. 50), the improvement of the educational objectives related to the formation of critical citizens, with democratic values and non-discrimination by gender or other factors of exclusion, implies that “the work in the classroom should be structured around two focuses: the conceptual revision and the understanding of the content”.

Table 4. Heterodox economic approach FDPs, University of Extremadura (UEX), 2015.

Date	Student	Faculty	Score (0–10)	Title of Final Degree Project
30 June 2015	J. González	Law	8.0	Labor exploitation in global capitalism: Class struggle.
30 June 2015	F. Mesa	Law	8.0	Micro-finance institutions: the case of the ethical bank.
13 July 2015	I. Díaz	Business	8.0	Basic income.
14 July 2015	C. Hidalgo	Business	6.5	Feminist economics: An approach from the crisis and neoliberal globalization.
14 July 2015	J.A. Torres	Business	7.5	Marxist approach to the economic crisis.
14 July 2015	L. Canelo	Business	6.7	Tax havens. Approach to tax fraud and money laundering.

Note: These FDPs have been directed by the main author of this paper, member of the Applied Economic Area belonging to the Department of Economy. Source: Our own from the official registry of the respective faculties.

(1) Conceptual revision: From a didactic point of view, the objective is to generate a significant change in the preconceived ideas of a topic. It is known as “conceptual change”, “change in the mental model” or “rectification of stereotypes and simplifications” (Polo 2006; Perkins 2010; Gardner 1991).

Students can develop their critical capacity and autonomous reflection if they show a predisposition to review their own beliefs and to accept—at least minimally—the basic premises of the critical approach. Such de/reconstructive process is not automatic or spontaneous, and less so in a social and cultural context in which submission, non-Freirian education, obedience, immediacy and superficiality are rewarded while critical or heterodox thinking is penalized.

Therefore, a didactic design that reveals the cognitive dissonance or “sociocognitive conflict” (Astolfi 2000) between two (or several) conceptions of the role of economics and finance in our world would be necessary.

According to Vázquez (2017), this implies, for the teacher, the implementation of tasks aimed at deepening the contradictions and contrasting the dominant theoretical knowledge with the concrete reality and the alternative explanatory approaches. Two good examples, among others, of this pedagogical approach are Professor Vicenç Navarro’s blog about economic and political divulgation (www.vnavarro.org) and the feminist researcher María Pazos Morán’s web page (www.mariapazos.com).

(2) Understanding of the content: It involves a process aimed at the active application of knowledge, which implies creativity and innovation. It is not enough for students to become familiar with the subjects and concepts of the subject, and much less to memorize them. They must internalize them in another way. Knowledge must lead to a search for new modes of action that can respond to complex situations and real problems (for example, pensions, unemployment, housing, indebtedness, climate change).

For this to be possible, students have to perform activities that are intellectually challenging, such as comparison, argumentation, questioning, discovery of problems, critical thought or anticipating the transfer of results to reality. They should have the teacher’s support and guidance to evaluate the quality of their own reasoning. This process can only be carried out by the emancipatory teacher profile, and not by the therapist or executive teacher models.

6. Conclusions

“Alternative policies are not possible until the way people feel, think and act is changed”. (Garrido 2012, p. 13).

We have highlighted the harmful role of anti-Marxism in university education, in the fields of economics and finance, mainly due to the neoliberal discourse on entrepreneurship and business ethics. We have also highlighted the need to recover Marxian thought as a model for the development of the students’ critical capacity. This is especially important since, after the economic crisis, there has been a return to Marx and the post-Marxist school, to try to find explanations for the crisis in the face of the insufficiency of the dominant economic theory, based on the quasi-robotic homo economicus (a cold and impartial calculator of the costs and benefits of each individual decision).

The main results of the empirical analysis carried out with bachelor and master’s students in Extremadura related to several subjects in economics show that the teaching of dominant economic thought still carries a great deal of weight in, despite the fact that there are conditions for students and teachers to redefine and expand the study of economics from critical approaches (feminism, Marxism, ecologism and others), according to the reviewed literature. This is especially true in periods of economic crisis, where there is a greater demand for reflections and responses to social and economic problems. These are often experienced in the first person, usually in poor regions, with below-average key national and European (macro)-economic indicators, as is the case of Extremadura. There is also a significant percentage of university students who express reluctance and a decline in their capacity to develop critical economic thinking, which may be linked to the rise of ultra-right ideologies.

In particular, the interaction of the dominant economy with the general process of psychologization and moral re-education has been revised. This interaction is particularly striking in the case of the university degrees of economy and business based on behavioral and cognitive psychology and on the neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurship and social responsibility, which promote teaching models (therapist and executive) that do not contribute to the fundamental pedagogical objective: the education of critical citizens with an ethical conscience, committed to fighting social injustice. In this paper, the therapeutic nature of the neoliberal psychological approach, designed to control and dissolve the workers’ resistance, is also questioned.

Finally, it is suggested that the promotion of an emancipatory teaching, with its difficulties and disadvantages, is useful to better analyze anti-Marxist and antidemocratic tendencies, as well as the promotion of an education in economics, business and finance that moves beyond profit maximization, establishing links with other heterodox disciplines such as critical psychology, critical management studies or critical economics.

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